

# REWRITE



# The Magazine of Effective Writing

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## HOW TO BE A WRITER

At the risk of being repetitious I am going to discuss the same subject I did in the December issue, but from a slightly different angle. It is a subject that really cannot be thought through too many times since it is basic to all we try to do and hope to be. These articles are therefore, simply intended to start you on your way. You can do original thinking on the subject, or you can in your wider reading pick up additional ideas to stimulate you. The main thing is to keep thinking about your work and its background. That way you can gain a perspective and increased clarity of purpose.

Let us therefore, use the same methods we used last month, but applying other ideas.

**TECHNIQUES.** Learn all of these you can as early as you can. In a certain sense a writer never stops learning, and he builds up a canny instinct out of his experience of actually doing. But in another sense he can't expect to write well until he has learned a lot about the technique of expressing ideas in the medium of words. It is not merely in the matter of learning a specific subject—like learning to speak French or to read in Spanish. Those are tangible subjects you can put your finger on. But writing is intangible, illusive. You have to learn all you're able to about ideas, words and, most of all, about yourself.

I have said many times that I was given a wonderful training at the right time, when I was permitted to study under "G.P." Baker in the famous old 47 Workshop Course in "Playwriting" at Harvard. Actually, it was a lot more than that. It was an opportunity to be a carpenter, to shift scenery and scrub the floors of a theater. For eight months of an academic year you lived the thing you loved and you gave little thought to your personal ambitions. "The Shop" came first. But you LEARNED what the theater was all about. How actors and writers behave when in the presence of an audience. And that is basic. The lessons you learned there through your very senses, are the same identical ones which a writer in any other field learns more slowly, because he does not enjoy the same contact with the audience or readers. But that does not change the fact that the fundamentals of projecting ideas and emotions to the public are the same in every medium.

I was way over my depth in the 47 Workshop, because I was an immature youngster just out of college and my fellow students were folk such as Philip Barry, the playwright; a kid brother of Drew Pearson; Tom Wolfe, a rather well known novelist; a successful writer of musical comedy books for the Shuberts, etc. Most of them were older than I, certainly, I would say, more mature and more experienced in their backgrounds. But for that very rea-

son I learned more and quicker the hard way about technique. I did a lot of thinking. I thought I was desperately unhappy. But then I was plunged into some personal drama, and had to fight for a chance to write without thought for technique. The stuff poured out and I began to be a writer. I found I had a technique at my disposal, and my interest in it has always been creatively alive. I recommend that any young writer get his beginning study of technique out of the way early. And let him remember he can never study it too hard at that age, so long as he keeps a warm, human interest in people alive.

**PEOPLE.** Music may be the food of love, but people are the materials out of which writers formulate all their ideas and everything they write. And the word "people" covers an enormous range, because it can include such human characters as Bambi, the deer, and so many places and institutions that your favorite writer has written movingly about. If you do nothing else, get close to people, be a friend and a good listener. It will bring you an unending stream of copy—if you listen with heart and keep your eyes well shined up.

You may never be able to travel very far. But you can still get to know a much wider, more assorted variety of people than do the conventionally-minded folk you ordinarily associate with. And that's all to the good. Of course you can go to the other extreme, but especially in your youth, it is good to know all kinds well. And to keep your exuberance that makes you like them, even when you see through them. That is the real value of the college education. It brings you close to a lot of people and ideas different from your own. And that is the danger of newspaper opportunities to write. Work on a city staff, and very quickly you become cynical. You see through every man and woman you meet. Faith in anything leaves you. That is why so many brilliant newspapermen prove dismal failures when they try to write fiction.

**CHARACTER.** The greatest character that almost every great writer creates is his own. O.Henry, Jack London, Dickens, Dumas, Daudet, to mention only a few. Lovable, weak, strong or what-you-will, but at least memorable. A writer may never be well known by his readers, but I doubt whether it is possible for a really weak and wishy-washy person to pen stories that will hold readers. Every human being is likely to have some failing or secret flaw. No one is perfect and it is part of the tragedy of life that persons holding tremendous promise, frequently live to watch that promise dulled or even fade because of some interior weakness. But that is life; we must make the most of our gifts. And recognition of such human failings does not alter the fact, and the necessity, that those who would project their ideas as story-tellers must be strong. So cultivate this quality & learn the value of force, dignity & integrity.

REWRITE

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KEEP      William E. Harris,      BRING  
AMERICA    Elva Ray Harris,      PEACE TO  
FREE!      Editors.      THE WORLD

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS—we cannot be responsible for changes not received in this office ONE MONTH in advance of taking effect. Whenever possible, please give exact date of change. Prompt renewals help us to serve you better.

THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK

Bill, Elva & Billy 'Gee thank all of you, who sent us hundreds of Christmas greetings and holiday poems. We wish you all success, bountiful sales and good health in 1949.

LET'S MAKE DEMOCRACY SUCCEED!

We might as well face the fact. There'll be no peace for the peoples of the world until the conflict between the leaders of the Politburo and the Western Powers is resolved.

But if we are wise, we will learn the lesson of the Second World War. We have placed our confidence in men at materials. But even if we conscript every man, woman & child, we cannot compete with Russia on that level. There are just not enough of us in the free world. Nor will the atom bomb end bacteriawarfare save us materially or spiritually.

But if you recall, it was not overwhelming military might that overcame the Germans, although that helped. At no time did we place more men in the front lines. Rather it was spiritual superiority. The spiritual superiority of the Russians who were determined a hostile army should not over-run their land. Of the free democracies which organized the greatest industrial mobilization ever known. And the underground forces in every subject country, that insisted on being free.

In the final analysis the Germans defeated themselves. Every time they took over another enemy country they forged another link in their own chains. They stretched the arm of their own iniquity too far and themselves too thin. They forgot the age-old lesson of history, that you cannot impose loyalty and affection by torture. And now the Russians, strangely, with the lesson still staring up at them from a million tortured faces, have committed the same grievous, irrevocable error. It is only a question of time before a tide of revolt will sweep the little men a-

way. But we will not hasten the coming of that fortunate day by weakening our own spiritual way of life.

Some economists are openly talking of maintaining our present "high level of employment, profits and prosperity" through spending on arms and overseas aid. (Hitler did it, therefore, why shouldn't we?) Could anything actually be more ridiculous? How long would the self-same banks that encourage such nonsense on a national scale, encourage you, an individual citizen, to over-extend your credit? Have you seen any of this so-called prosperity? Insufficient housing; what there is, deteriorating as never before; high prices on all essential necessities of living; luxury items going begging. Is that Prosperity?

America is a land of plenty, if we manage our resources and ourselves with wisdom and commonsense. But a prosperity that is shared only by a portion of our people will not long endure. It is only as we plan wisely to make all the people healthy, wealthy & wise, that any minority of them will prosper. No nation can have black markets, gambling, political corruption, as the newspapers state that we have, on the one hand and expect to have strong, virile spiritual life on the other. Wine and water, gasoline and liquor simply do not mix. Americans can have practically anything they ask of the future, if they are willing to pay the price in faith, hope and life-giving work.

We are wasting our strongest weapon in the fight against dictatorship and a slave world. There is immense dissatisfaction behind the iron curtain. Men look with longing to this land of Freedom. Each time we advance the idea of democratic spirit and belief in clarity and decisive action behind our own golden curtain, we make it that much harder for the forces of personal greed to rally their forces—even by torture and death.

A BOOK FOR WRITERS

THE WAY TO WRITE. Rudolph Flesch & A.H. Lesser & Brothers. \$3.50. It is a sad irony that the very thing these two authors teach is exemplified in the title. This book does not teach you how to write; it does teach an illiterate man—and most of us are that—how to use words with more precision. As such, a great many writers will blush after reading it. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

A PAIR OF NEWS NOTES

The Midwestern Writers' Conference, Alice Manning Dickey, Suite 540, 410 So. Michigan Ave., Chicago 5, Ill., is publishing an occasional Bulletin. It is full of news, helpful information, etc. for writers. Members, the officers serve without pay, may support the organization by paying the \$2 fee. They can compete for prizes.

Alan Swallow, Publisher, Denver 10, Colo., plans a series of books, "The New Poets".

REWRITE

FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Rey Harris

RESOLUTIONS FOR POETS

This being the month when we look back over the past year and decide we'll be sweet-er to our wives or our husbands, do more for and with our children, be kinder to our dogs, and business associates, let's make resolu-tions about ourselves as poets.

Let us resolve not to go around with "our backs up". Let us not construe criticism of our poetry as personal insults. But rather appreciate that any comments we receive are meant to be helpful. Let us take them in the spirit they are given. When the doctor says that our child's tonsils need to come out, we don't draw ourselves up and snap, "She's my child and I like her the way she is." No, we thank him for his advice and do something about it. So, when a friendly critic advises us our snapes need breaking up or our imagery needs clarifying, let us go to work—like surgeons to put our brain children into good condition.

Let us resolve to brush the "stardust" out of our eyes. Give heaven credit if we want to for our inspiration, but not for the words in which to express it. Phrases, sentences, sentence-structure and grammar are "earthy" things and as such are as weak, and capable of being improved as human beings.

Let us resolve not to be too easily satisfied. Let us not be content to remain in the first markets we were able to hit. Quite the contrary, let us reach out for some markets that are a little harder to make. But when we hit them, let's not ignore the friendly editors of the small magazines or the newspaper columns, who gave us our first encourage-ment. Surely we can help them fill up their white space now and then.

Let's not be satisfied with writing a poem today that is no better than the one that we wrote yesterday. Let's not turn out lots of poorly written poetry when with a little more work we could do a few well done poems. A good motto for us is the commercial theme we hear on the radio: "We pledge you the best today, still better tomorrow."

Let us resolve not to be easily discourag-ed. Let us hang on tenaciously & keep trying in the face of the greatest odds. For what-ever the odds, they are probably greater in the field of poetry than in any other phase of writing. We can sell pretty bad fiction, and factual material written according to a low standard occasionally brings in a fairly high return. But the best that we can do with our poorly organized, poorly written & often unimaginative poetic inspiration is to give it away. And even then we cannot usually give it to the magazines in which we would most like to have it appear.

Let us remember that the battle was tough also for people like Robert Frost. (Doesn't every schoolboy know about his struggle?) And it has been equally hard for our own contemporaries who have made the grade, such as Mae Winkler Goodman and Helen Small.

Five years ago they were comparatively un-known. I think it was in 1944 that Miss Good-man's first small book came out. You'd call it a pamphlet or booklet, a brochure. It was not a real book. It was published by an editor whom Mae had found to be friendly. He is Loring E. Williams, editor of the American Weave Magazine. He believed in her suf-ficiently to put out a few hundred copies, a paper-bound edition, of a modest number and careful selection of her poems. But she kept plugging along, writing, writing, and gradu-ally we began to see her name in many other places. Now we pick up almost any of the big magazines almost any month, and we find her there. And she has a larger, hard cover-ed volume published by the same editor.

Five years ago Helen Small hadn't sold any-thing to speak of. She was very discouraged but she thought she could die happy, if she could sell one poem to the SAT. EVE. POST. She's still living and still plugging. And she's hit the POST, as well as a number of other big magazines, several times. And she has been in scads of smaller magazines. But it all happened in the last two or three of those five years. So let us resolve to keep plugging and to make as brave a fight as our successful forebears and contemporaries have and be confident that we too shall come out on top some day.

And when we do come out on top, let us re-solve to be the same humble people we were, when we were struggling for recognition. Oh, let us glory in our achievement, but not in a lordly way. Let us enjoy a quiet sense of having achieved something worthwhile. We've as much right to that as the farmer looking with pride at the row of corn he has just hoed or the housewife, who surveys her freshly mop-ped kitchen floor with satisfaction. And let us realize that our success may be justes-temporary as theirs. The weeds will grow again with the corn; there will be tracks of mud on the floor, and we will have to work, continuously and hard, to sell more poetry.

And finally, let us realize that even if a run of success were permanent, it doesn't con-stitute grounds for letting down in the etern-al fight to be a better Human Being. Family, friends, and associates are also "public". As a matter of policy, if for no other reason, let us resolve to be "livable with". In the long run it will make us better poets.

A BOOK OF POEMS

A SIGN TO SOLACE. Donald Earl Edwards. The American Weave Press. 50¢. A brochure of 24 poems mostly of faith and hope with a few of war and despair. Not the best brochure.

## REWRITE

### FAIR PLAY FOR THE LITTLE MAGAZINES

With this issue, REWRITE and all the other magazines that are unable because of special formats, to qualify for 2nd Class postal rates, are being socked extra expense so as to reduce the postal deficit. Undoubtedly, a number of these small magazines will not be able to continue because of the ever rising cost of publication. If this were a wartime necessity, it would be one thing. But it is largely due to inflated costs and waste and extravagance. Nor is it fair because only a short time ago, Morris Ernst, former counsel to the Senate Small Business Committee, reportedly stated that: "You know as well as I do that there are four magazine companies in the United States that get a subsidy from the United States Government. Two years ago, it was about \$34,000,000 a year."

Mr. Ernst suggested that the postage subsidy be graded, and that small weeklies under 20,000 circulation, get free postage. A charge would be made as the circulation goes up. Postmaster Jesse Donaldson has gone one step further. He has suggested to President Truman that "magazines which devote more of their space to advertising than to reading-content, should bear the brunt of the raise in rates. (Another increase will undoubtedly be passed by Congress in this session.)

We believe that the Postmaster General intends to be fairer than any of his "political" predecessors. Small newspapers should be exempted on the theory that properly edited, they carry the news of the world. In doing so they help to preserve our democratic ideal.

But we respectfully urge the establishment of a graded postal rate on the small publications in the magazine field. A special class or special division of the 3rd Class should be made for these. Some very high grade Quality magazines can be counted in this classification. At one time STORY could have availed itself of such a rating.

The point is that these magazines contribute far beyond a mere physical estimate of their size and importance to the cultural thought and understanding of our world and its ideals. A majority of our best writers, a careful survey would unmistakably show, had got their start in the Little magazines. There will be no future for the "Big" magazines, if the "little" ones are not maintained. Do you remember how much money the "big league" ball clubs spend on the "farms"? The principle is just the same.

## OVERTONES CAN GET YOU TANGLED UP

I am constantly made aware of the necessity for using words with precision. You are under an inescapable compulsion to make the words you use have the same meaning for the readers you attract. Many words develop overtones of meaning from excessive use. It is a fact that you cannot use such a word with different overtone implications, if the overtone meaning that readers naturally associate with it gets in between you and whatever idea you are trying to put over.

In a poem Elva read in ms. recently there occurred the phrase "we two are one". We immediately thought of a man and woman deeply in love. But I don't think that was what the author had in mind. And since the next idea was a religious one, a very sensitively intended thought ended up in a jangle. A confused, unclear image or overtone is equally as bad as one that "adds up" incorrectly.

Poets especially should watch for phrases that have accumulated meanings from use. A sonorous description such as "golden gate", is dangerous because it instantly brings to mind a special one in San Francisco. Or again, "bat boy" raises a baseball image. I remember years ago I was asked to speak at a meeting where the previous speakers started a game built around the name, I think, of playwrights. A quiz.. Every time I mentioned a name, there was a disturbing flurry.. See what I mean?

## TWO GOOD IDEAS

### NEW PRESS PUBLISHES JUVENILES TO COMBAT THE COMICS

A group of parents in Mamaroneck, New York, recently banded together to form an organization known as the Westchester Group, Inc. to combat the sale, in Mamaroneck, of comic books which its members considered unsuitable for their children. Now the group, headed by H. H. Stansbury, has gone into publishing. A ten cent, paper-bound condensation of Hans Christian Andersen's "The Nightingale," illustrated by Dong Kingman, has just been issued under the imprint, Once-Upon-A-Time Press.

### BANKS BUY MEMBERSHIPS IN HISTORY BOOK CLUB

Several months ago a banker bought a year's membership in the History Book Club to donate to the local high school as an American History Award. The club then decided to suggest the idea to other banks in the country. A small test mailing was made which brought a good response. A larger mailing was then made, with the result that banks in nearly 100 cities and towns are now sponsoring such memberships in the History Book Club as American History Awards. In most cases, the Club says, the memberships are being presented at the end of the school year to the student who has made the highest grades in American history during the year.

PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY

Ray C. Winingham, a reader, and user, of Elva's poetry page (he has been leading a group of writers in the Florida Penitentiary at Raiford), was given a Christmas parole. He has shown considerable promise. Articles by him have been published in a number of outside professional magazines. Dr. Belle Mooney, a REWRITE reader, has befriended him and kept us informed of his progress.

Mrs. Florence M. Davis, long-time subscriber to REWRITE, reports that her son has recently sold a story, "Special Mission", about intrigue in Germany, to BLUE BOOK. It's scheduled, she says, for March. The interesting thing for writers, however, is that he got a bonus of \$50 for "timeliness".

The EDITOR & PUBLISHER stated in its December 11th issue, that following suggestions and requests from newspapers, syndicates are tightening taboos, requiring their comic strip artists to kill "crime, horror & indecency". Good taste is fashionable now.

## REWRITE

### ANOTHER ENEMY OF RACKETS

RURAL NEW YORKER, M.G.Keyes, 330 West 30th St., NYC 1, can be added to the growing list of magazines that are genuinely concerned about protecting their readers from the many types of rackets that prey on writers. The editor mentioned above is RNY'S "Publisher's Desk Editor" in charge of answering inquiries. As such, he wrote to us recently about the proper answer to a songwriter's problem arising from a circular mailed out by a notorious racket. We referred him to Syde Bernstein, The SONGWRITERS' REVIEW, 1650 Broadway, NYC, and pledged him fullest cooperation in helping him to answer questions on which we might be in a position to know the story.

RNY is a market that many of our readers, we are glad to say, have found friendly. It does not pay a high rate and much of the correspondence and verse it accepts is on an "on publication" basis. But many writers on rural and country themes have found their earliest experience in its columns. It's worth studying carefully.

### SHADOW OF THINGS TO COME      A TREND

And while we are on the subject of rural magazines, let us bring to your attention THE PROGRESSIVE, Morris H. Rubin, 408 West Gorham St., Madison 3, Wis. It is not an open market, though free lancers can sell it occasionally. But it is good reading for those desiring to understand the Americas of 1949. Many rising young politicians with liberal ideas contribute to it. REWRITE exchanges with it.

### ONE FOR THE BOOK

The holiday season often generates many amusing anecdotes, and book shops are no exception. Toward the end of a hectic day, the regular clerks in the Harvard Cooperative Society's Book Department were letting their hair down regarding the peculiar eccentricities of the "temporaries", whom the Radcliffe Employment Office, very considerately, had sent over.

"This morning," beamed a blond, handsome youth, "I was waiting on Mrs. Bernard DeVoto, when one of our girls strolled over and told me to: 'Break it up!'"

### HERE IS AN IDEA

For writers who find it necessary to publish their own books, we suggest they consult POLITZER, Times Bldg., NYC 18. He does promotion for trade publishers.

### (Exclusive)

### ABOUT JUVENILE REPRINT RIGHTS & SALES

Recently one of our readers reported that he had received a check for \$1, representing his share of a resale, according to the editor of the story paper to which he originally had sold the piece. Never having heard of such a phenomenon in the juvenile field, he asked us about it. We wrote to the editor. Here is the answer we received.

The Westminster Press  
Witherspoon Bldg.,  
Philadelphia 7, Pa.

Dear Mr. Harris:

Some time ago you asked the editor of FORWARD to explain our policy of sharing along with authors proceeds from resales.

Since many smaller denominations requested from time to time the privilege of republishing articles from our story papers (FORWARD, GATEWAY, PIONEER and STORIES), we set up a few years ago a regular reselling service. We established a scale for stories and articles based on the circulation figures of the paper concerned.

### TO WATCH! Sterling Wants Eyes

A radioman's nightmare came true last week: one of the nation's biggest advertisers announced that it was dropping radio in favor of television.

Sterling Drug, Inc., which produces, among other things, Bayer aspirin, Dr. Lyons toothpowder, Phillip's milk of magnesia and Double Dandene shampoo, has been spending some \$8 million a year in radio. Its programs include two of the oldest on the air: Manhattan Merry Go Round and The American Album of Familiar Music (both NBC). It also sponsors Mystery Theatre and another whodunit, Mr. Chameleon (CBS), as well as a handful of soap operas including Backstage Dallas, Young Widder Brown, and Stage Fright.

The shift from radio to television—first by a major advertiser—was announced by Sterling's president James Hill Jr. in an interview with New York Herald Tribune business writer Harvey E. Runner. There were two basic reasons, said Hill: the "high cost" of radio, and his own belief that television will eventually replace radio as a medium. In big cities, television set owners have already stopped listening to radio, he added.

Million by Million. Sterling won't drop all its shows at once. It will cut radio advertising by about \$1 million in the next six months, continue gradually thereafter. (Hill wouldn't say which shows would be first to go.) While waiting for television to grow into its \$8-million-a-year budget, the company will increase advertising in newspapers and magazines.

Meanwhile, it will experiment in television. First experiment: a five-day-a-week, half-hour audience participation show on DuMont station WABD in New York. It will be called Okay, Mother, will plug aspirin, magnesium and tooth powder, and will probably start this month.

PATHFINDER

Although we purchase full serial rights and are not therefore, now legally bound to give writers any further compensation, we decided, however, that we would share equally with the authors all proceeds from these resales. As you can readily see, the checks, and the money involved are not large, but they do help in some measure to compensate for the fact, that religious story papers can't pay very high rates to authors in the first place.

I do not care whether or not our name is mentioned in relation to this information. We do not advertise our policy, but neither are there any secrets about it.

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs.) Aurelia Reigner  
Editor, PIONEER & GATEWAY.

### ANOTHER REWRITE SERVICE

One rather valuable by-product of the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB is the practice we have developed of tipping our writer friends off when we spot a new book along the line of their special interest or the subject they happen to be "digging" on. This gives them an extra eye, so to speak. It often helps them to check on markets or what others are doing in the same field.

## REWRITE

### BEING FUNNY IS SERIOUS BUSINESS

Humor is the hardest type of writing that a critic can pick out to teach. This is because what is funny to you is nonsense to a relative, friend or neighbor. Humor is also evanescent and spontaneous. The minute that you try to explain it, much of the fun disappears. But there are types of humor. And the principles behind humor are the same as those behind every other kind of writing.

Let us look at a few of the various types of fun-making. It will give you some ideas as to the possibilities.

(1) Situation. This is a set-up that is almost sure-fire. Given the circumstances, you are practically certain to get comedy. Last night Elva and I listened to the Eddie Cantor show. After a series of cracks regarding Television, which served as lead-in, a situation was developed of Eddie trying to get a job in television and being everywhere refused because he was too old. That was the basic premise. Note that it was an easy absurdity for the audience to accept: a double absurdity, because Eddie does not show age; because he is a great star. But granted, the premise immediately permitted a series of amusing scenes, such as Dinah Shore refusing him a spot on her television show, then another supporting player giving him the dime for coffee he asked instead of a chance on a show sponsored by Eddie's own sponsor, etc. The snapper was a twist on the "situation": Eddie at last found his chance and then discovered he had bought a television set, instead of being offered a contract (mistaken identity of an object rather than a person).

This was a specialized situation. It could only be used once, although it is susceptible of being switched or stolen. Compare a rather well known alley that Fred Allen has a fondness for, and the "routine" of which a number of other radio shows have been regularly snitching recently, including the humorist himself, because he has been switching and dressing up his own act lately. You perhaps can recall a favorite situation. I think immediately of Shakespeare's hilarious "The Taming of the Shrew". Again, a "situation" built on the reversal of a man taming a fiery woman instead of trying to woo her.

(2) Characterization. In this type the funniness arises not from situation but from a character-trait. Remember how the shrew, the old maid, the mother-in-law, the skin-flint and the social-climber are all good for the raucous horse-laugh on the broader level of vaudeville humor. These are really (3) Caricature. Shakespeare and Moliere both found this form of humor an easy way to popularity. In its more obvious forms this type has a marked resemblance to political name-calling. Remember Moliere's "smear" of the medical profession? But the great comic writers have known how to refine their caricatures—to keep them within the confines of brilli-

ant and humorous understanding of character. Think down the list and you will notice that most of the great comedies are built around a memorable character more than a situation. One of the greatest of all comedies, George Bernard Shaw's "Candida", carries the proof in the title. Though actually, it is a situation comedy quite as much as it is a character comedy. But by his deft understanding and humorous perception of human failings, I think you will agree that Shaw has raised a conventional love story far above its situational values.

(4) Word play. This by far the most popular and varied form of humor. Witness what radio does with this. Puns, double-meanings or quick turns of meaning and occasionally the flash of genuine wit, are all possibilities that the comedians use again and again. Nor don't overlook Jimmy Durante's butchering of the King's English. There is the wise-crack and the anecdote, too.

As a matter of fact, you will see quickly and easily from these main divisions, which merely skim the cream, that there are great numbers of ways to be funny. Winchell's distortions and coining of run-together words, are as different from Durante's malapropism technique as snow is from fire. Each man is a law unto himself and there is always room for the new-comer with the skill to develop a new blend or twist of old routines.

Let us now glance briefly at the technique of putting humor over. It is done, as is every other form of writing, by a one-two-three method of catching, holding and shocking an interested audience. Which implies that you must use the right kind of humor for each & every audience. You wouldn't put "Candide", for instance, in front of an audience which had paid its money to see Sophie Tucker. An additional reason why it is so important to study the book.

Every gag, wise-crack or extended humorous piece is divided, like Gaul, into three parts. There is first of all the Springboard. "Pat was walking down the street." Some writers would call it the "Situation" or "Hook". Nomenclature isn't important. What is vitally important is to recognize that you must begin crisply and clearly with something specific that the reader can easily grasp as an idea. Like the magician who shows you a hat and a rabbit or an egg. He tells you exactly what he is going to do with them, so you know what to expect.

The second step is the development. Reader is given all the necessary facts. Again, like the magician, you make this dull job of assembling the apparatus as interesting and suspensive as you can. Then, presto, comes, like the proverbial bolt from the blue, the shocking, surprising twist or snapper. It's unexpected, absolutely different from whatever you thought was coming. That's part of the showmanship. "Hit 'em where they ain't."

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### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CHILD AUDIENCES

In the NY TIMES' Magazine Section for December 6, 1948, there was an interview with Sarah Newmeyer, vice president of the Children's World Theater. It contained some illuminating comments on child psychology, as seen through the reactions to plays produced by this group. The article was entitled, "For Children It Is Not Make-Believe". Some of the points made that should interest you who write for and about children, were:

(1) They identify themselves—like adults—with the characters they visualize as themselves. They "seem to delight in this make-believe from the day they first toddle into the theater."

(2) They react violently. They hate the bad and villainous characters. They dislike the simless clowning that is merely "silly". It is real character comedy that holds them. A positive philosophy of life in which "good" triumphs after a struggle, pleases them.

(3) They like to share the story. They well enjoy those scenes where they share a secret at the expense of some of the characters, as when they know the Wolf is in the rain-barrel listening while Red Riding Hood and her mother and grandmother plot ways to beat him. This kind of suspense, of course, is popular with grown-ups. It is usually devised rather than spontaneously natural. It requires technically imaginative use of one's material. They author sees a chance to develop it.

(4) They love magic. This is contrary to the theories held by many editors and writers. A story like the "King Midas" play is popular to an extreme. The children like to see the successive articles and people turned to gold. This is a natural reaction, if you think about it. Because it supports their interest in living intensely and seeing things "happen" and their positive faith that anything is possible.

(5) They enjoy excitement. A thrilling chase is always enthusiastically received. But to "keep suspense from passing the danger line into actual fear, such situations have to be lightened with humor. The Giant has to bump his head, take a comic tumble. Then shrieks of suspense change to laughter."

(6) They demand a fair fight. "The most popular plays are those in which the struggles between good and evil are fiercely fought.. The children want the hero or heroine to be hard pressed, to have a tough time, a really difficult struggle to overcome the villain. Accordingly, the villain is most 'successful' when he is a formidable villain... The kids want him to be so bad that he must surely deserve punishment. They want to win a victory over him—the victory is theirs—just as much as the hero's. The crime must, however, deserve the punishment, for otherwise the children's sense of justice is out-

raged."

And as a final thought, Miss Newmeyer has this to say: "The kinds of thing I have been mentioning as popular with our junior audiences, seem also to win over the seniors" .. This is very true. You must not be too literal in applying any generality. But one of the reasons we have quoted so extensively & have underlined the points made by this article, is that we believe they are potentially applicable to adult writing. Men & women slough off much of the imaginative naturalness and eager response of children. But they are susceptible of being stirred in the same ways and by similar methods as are the young readers. Articles such as this one do much to help us to understand our audience. Writers should constantly be on the lookout for them wherever they may be printed.

## NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Bill and Elva recently contributed a complete file of her "Fundamentals of Good Poetry" page to the Braille Poets' Guild. It is doing a good job of helping blind poets. It has published an anthology, "They Sing In the Night".

We noticed in editing the above article about child audiences, that the NYC TIMES in its Magazine Section uses an occasional poem (light verse) humorously decorated by an artist with suitable drawings around it. A two-column filler. This might be a market—for a clever cartoonist and light verse author.

A well known non-advertising agent thinks so well of REWRITE that she recently mailed us a check for a four years' subscription—three of it covering the years we have been sending her REWRITE as a goodwill investment for our many writer friends. That certainly indicates her desire to support the jobs REWRITE has been doing in the public interest of all writers, writers' clubs, editors teachers of writing and others. As a matter of fact, the list of reputable agents, editors, publishers, teachers and big name professional writers, who have been our yearly paid subscribers practically from the first issue, makes us at once very proud and very humble. It keeps us constantly aware of our opportunity, responsibility and obligation. We hope God will continue to give us imagination and strength sufficient to serve the writing profession faithfully and unselfishly.

We had a brief flurry of excitement early in December. Stopped by a policeman, our junior editor discovered the license plates of her car had been stolen. The Cambridge police woke us at 2 A.M. to tell us they were recovered in Boston's crowded North End—on the stolen new car of an official of the Deaconess Hospital. All of which made for a busy and lively twenty-four hours living a true-life story.

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### THE AUTHORS' LEAGUE FORMS A NEW GUILD

A bulletin just received from the Authors' League of America, Rex Stout, chairman, the Television Committee, 6 East 39th St., NYC, 16. The League's Council has voted to start a Television Writers' Guild. All writers in or out of the Authors' League are eligible. (The policy of the League is to assign members to the Guilds representing the field in which they do most of their writing. This is a very wise policy, because it brings together writers having a mutual interest and need of protection.)

REWRITE is glad to see the League take this forward step. Television will undoubtedly prove to be a very important new medium for writers. It is vital for writers to get organized before too many precedents become established by those who wish to exploit the medium unduly for private profit. It is much easier for writers to get fair treatment before an industry grows up than afterwards—provided they themselves know their reasonable rights and are willing—to fight for them.

The League urges all writers, who have done any Television writing to contact Mr. Stout. And it wants all members to give the Committee a confidential resume of their Television sales, leases, amounts paid and also any permissions for adaptations. This information is necessary. With it the Committee can work for writers' protection.

REWRITE is glad to advise and indeed, urges all writers, who are in categories eligible to join any one or more of the Guilds, to enroll in the league at once. We have further urged the League to broaden membership requirements, so as to include the free lances selling to the small markets. For they are certainly the writers most needing protection and they are the most numerous. If they could join the League, they without any doubt would give it substantial support and greatly added strength. The League's war-chest could now materially be filled up by the small, but numerous dues these writers and part-time authors could afford.

### SOMETHING DOING EVERY MINUTE

"Extry! Extry!" Hardly had we set up the little paragraph on Page 7 about Elva's stolen plates, when the Fire Department whooshed into WCS's constricted Little Langdon St. All the apparatus for a two-alarm fire. Our benevolent janitor had placed a pile of hot clinkers on loose boards.

### XMAS GIFT FOR THE WCS AID FUND

The WCS Scholarship Fund received a check from our writer friend, Paul Twitchell, just before Christmas. In the same mail we found a need for a subscription to REWRITE. From a poet who has been a long-time reader of it. We were very happy therefore, to be able to put part of Paul's gift to good use. We paid part of the "present" ourselves personally.

## The Art of the Comics

by JAMES DAUGHERTY

CONSIDERABLE dust has been kicked up lately about the comic magazine and their alleged effect on juvenile delinquency. In fact the subject has rated a debate on Town Hall of the Air and articles in "The Saturday Review of Literature" and elsewhere.

If the comics do have bad effects on the morals, manners and speech of our children, certain the parents who take a serious interest in their children's reading, as well as the publishers, are responsible. No doubt the comics, together with the movies, current fiction and the radio, could provide higher levels of entertainment for the young as well as their elders.

These negative aspects of the comic strip at present overshadow unduly its larger aspects and positive achievements. The comic sequence picture has a long and distinguished record of accomplishment as a means of conveying humor, wit and laughter to millions of our own and earlier generations of vipers.

Obviously Disney is the chief contributor whose genius has lightened the burden of our times, certainly Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Pluto and their companions—those fantastic creatures neither animal nor human—have mightily vanquished the demon dullness from our days of wrath. Among others who have achieved civilized humor of the first order in the comic strip technique are Frueh, Guyler, Wilkins and Soglow's unforgettable "Little King," to mention at random only three in a long list

### THERE IS AN ART

We have done a considerable amount of shooting at the Comics. So we are pleased to present a defense of them by a writer and artist. (Mr. James Daugherty is the author, incidentally, of a children's book, "The Wild, Wild West", which uses a picture-in-a-series method, adapted from the Comics, to tell a story.)

We have never quarreled with the Comics as an art form, but only with, and strenuously, too, the users of it, who degraded it by bad art and obnoxious materials.

We believe, as does Mr. Daugherty, that the medium is capable of artistic use, and skilful use also by writers.

of illustrators hardly less accomplished. One also recalls Thurber's, "Dog and the Bug" and "Dog and the Hat," as well as the epic of the atomic age, "The Little Flower," with gratitude.

These men are really to be rated as creative artists in a native graphic art form that is rich, vital and dynamic and of the widest possible popular appeal. Personally, I find the best effects are achieved in sequence pictures when lettering is omitted, the so-called "balloons" destroy the quality and impact of the drawing and reduce the pictures to a mere accompaniment to a story that is really told in words rather than pictures. The purely pictorial medium for telling a story has been extended to the novel form. The Belgian artist Maizred has created several novels in wood cuts that convey a dramatic story and a stark mood. The American illustrator Lynn Ward has produced several distinguished novels without words in this medium and his superb picturization called "Wild Pilgrimage" is one of the finest achievements in creative illustration. These are a few examples of the rich possibilities of the sequence picture as a serious and important story telling medium.

The ancestry of the so-called comic cartoon is both ancient and distinguished. In London in the eighteenth century the celebrated artist William Hogarth produced several detailed and elaborate picture stories in the form of engravings which developed a melodramatic plot through many elaborated scenes. The most popular of these was "The Marriage of a la mode," "The Industrious Apprentice," "The Rake's Progress" and "The Harlot's Progress." "The Harlot's Progress" was enormously popular and thrilled and instructed both the wicked and the virtuous. These superb characterizations were lurid satires purporting to discourage vice and stimulate the middle class virtues.

In even earlier centuries a popular theme for the "comic" cartoon treatment was "The Dance of Death." This theme carried the grim overtones of the present day comic magazine of the murder mystery class. It was a series of woodcuts portraying the grim reaper obtruding appropriately on a great variety of human situations ranging the whole social scale from king to peasant. The most famous of these prints was by the great portrait painter Hans Holbein. Their effect was somewhat depressing but expressive of the macabre moods of the time. Through hundreds of years of history what we call the "comic" strip has served as an immensely popular story telling medium, reflecting the culture and mood of its time.

While one agrees in the main with John Mason Brown's eloquent blast at the more sordid aspects of the comic magazine, I think we should be willing to recognize the comic picture medium in its wider fields as a vital story telling form and as a permanent and immensely popular art. We should perhaps be more grateful for its capacities in the hands of genius to provide entertainment, gout and delight to the not too colorful living of millions of young and old in a world and time not too often or fully supplied with occasion for healing laughter.

McClurg's BOOK NEWS

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HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

In this column all the members of the WCS Family have a chance to indulge in friendly competition with their neighbors. The "Family" includes everyone who reads REWRITE, or patronizes any of our numerous services. We want you to work with us for better writing for you and all writers. In this column you can check what some editors are buying. And sales are often made on the basis of information picked up in this corner.

We give prizes under a quarterly & yearly plan. To the writer who fattens his average the most in the preceding 3 months. Also to the writer who makes the most of what he has got and who displays the most character and conduct worthy of our great profession. And finally, a prize goes to the best Minute Man for his reporting of markets and hints that writers ought to know about.

And don't forget REWRITE's Annual Award of Merit. It is given each year in February to the outstanding writer it has been a pleasure for us to meet through this column.

Rebecca Phillips

Short short: MAGNIFICAT, Dakota FARMER. Articles: AMERICAN BABY, women's section of Winnipeg FREE PRESS, Montreal FAMILY HERALD and Toronto STAR. Also: the LITTLE FLOWER and BETTER FARMS.

Marjorie S. Scheuer

Poems: N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE, C.S. MONITOR.

Hazel May Wynn

Article & stories: CHILD'S COMPANION.

Carrie Esther Hammil

Poems & Articles: CHILD'S COMPANION.

B. Cousin Black

Monthly Column: EVERYDAY ASTROLOGY.

Frances W. Blose

Article: THE CHRISTIAN HOME.

Paul Twitchell

Detective story: SHADOW.

Ruhama Jans

Short Story: BLUE BOOK (A second sale).

Bernard Roth

Article: SIR.

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Please RENEW your subscription PROMPTLY & urge others to subscribe. You'll get more!

WRITER, WHERE IS YOUR NOTEBOOK?

By Jewel Shasteen French

I have often wondered how I would explain the contents of those little notebooks if ever they should fall into the hands of the F.B.I. What would you think if you chanced upon and read, "Kill the man in the drugstore, coffee, sugar, take Sadie to the dentist... rainy, foggy night good time to kill the woman and hide her body in the shrubbery, wife will be the accused." Now what would you do and think?

If you really are serious, you will realize the importance of taking time to jot down the thoughts and bits of plot that flit into your mind as you go about your household tasks. You will store them away for the time when the children are taking their afternoon naps or after the other members of the family are in bed. It may be your lot to wash dirty little faces and prepare formulas besides being chief cook and bottle-washer as it was with me, but remember to keep a little notebook handy!

I have found through experience that words and thoughts flow freely during writing periods if I have a booster, such as notes taken during the day at odd times. Now, I keep a pencil and notebook by my bedside to write down thoughts before I go to sleep. And every purse I own has its own notebook & pencil. Frequently during family drives or excursions into the country, I see interesting scenery, houses or characters that would be good story material with further developing as I think about them.

On one such trip. I noticed a dirty, ragged, unshaven man. His clothes hung like an enormous sack on his gaunt figure. But the thing that started my mind working was that his shoes were shined to a high lustre. The contrast looked odd for such a character. I later used him in "Boot Murder". My mind instinctively wove a fictional tale around the shoes. He kept them shined because while the murder was committed, his shoes became splattered and always afterward when he looked at his shoes, he thought he could see traces of the blood on them. (This finally proved to be his downfall.)

Life is never drab for a writer, whether he is aspiring or professional. Writers are not made in Heaven, they are created by constant study, work and the persistent application, you recall, of the seat of the pants to the chair with a pencil or typewriter in the immediate foreground. We writers have a world of our own in which we can escape from realities at will and live the thrilling amorous experiences of our heroine.

Every instructor I have studied under, in various fiction and non-fiction courses, has been insistent that I keep notebooks handy. To record tips as they come to me. And be-

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lieve me they do come out of nowhere, apparently. So let's get the little notebooks out and let them pay off!

(Note: this is one of the articles that we at REWRITE are beginning to receive increasingly from authors, who are both known, and unknown to us. We believe strongly in note-taking, although notebooks wrongly used can be very stultifying. It is our opinion that every writer has to work out a technique of his own. But Mrs. French writes engagingly, makes a case for notebooks, the while she's coloring her point with glimpses of her own practical experience. We think her article, unquestionably, will make writers think regarding their own methods. And that's good.)

### A THOUGHT FOR NEW YEAR'S

For more than a year we have not advertised our WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE in any other writers' magazine. For nearly a year, we have not advertised REWRITE under those conditions. We have simply sent sample copies, to individual writers, and bundles to clubs, conferences and writers' classes. (We are always glad to meet serious writers half-way, and to work closely with earnest groups.) At the beginning of December, in fact just after Thanksgiving Day, REWRITE had sold more copies than it had in 1947.

REWRITE is thus one of the very few magazines in the country whose paid circulation has not declined. We accept this testimonial from writers with deep humility. We are not boasting and we hope we can maintain an enviable record of public service for writers and the best interests of their profession.

One of the things we have learned in this trial year is that it is "good business" not to invite comparison with the general run of advertising critics and literary agents who fill the pages of the majority of the writers' magazines with their panegyrics of the Success they can make for you. We offer only our long experience and a wealth of practical knowledge from working with all types of writers. We never advertise WCS, or Bill & Elva in REWRITE. Our clients come to us almost exclusively because of "word-of mouth" recommendation from our satisfied friends. A difficult year having gone by, we are happy that we made our resolution to join the non-advertising agents as perhaps the only non-advertising writers' counsel service. God-willing, we don't expect ever to return to the old back-patting, high pressure technique of shouting, "Look at us! We are wonderful!.. Our job is helping writers, not selling you a mail-order package, or service.

### THE RICH GOT RICHER, THE POOR GOT TAXED

The little fellow gets it in the neck one more time. Beginning January 1, the smaller magazines, like REWRITE, which don't have a Second Class mail privilege, are being taxed an extra \$10 per year. The GOP Congress!

### Something to think about!

#### HOW CAN WE MAKE THIS HELP PEOPLE?

We saw some figures the other day, culled from a booklet published by the Public Affairs Committee. These figures purport to show an enormous "advance" in the "progress" of the American people through the use of power and machines. The booklet is entitled incidentally, "Power, Machines and Plenty". (There's an ironic implication in that title, if you stop to think of it.)

"In 1850, the average American worked—70 hours a week. Today he works 43. In 1850, he produced about 27 cents' worth of goods per hour. Today he produces about \$1.40 worth—in dollars of the same purchasing value."

On the surface this reflects an amazing achievement in material productivity & prosperity. Men do not have to work so long for the ordinary essentials of food, clothing & shelter. Men's "life and health potentials" have increased enormously within the period of practically a generation.

But it must be remembered that twice in a single lifetime we have used that increased productivity for "all-out" destruction. Today, we are still devoting a major slice of that excess productivity for the preparation of further destruction. Men are not getting the good of it. For in spite of it, starvation still is an every day eventuality to a goodly portion of the world's population. A lot of our so-called "middle class" is living in sub-marginal slums today. If a man works shorter hours today, he has to work under a greater strain. There is more worry to keep the wolf from the door today. Certainly you see more men dying of heart and nervous diseases. There is more crime in proportion to population; more divorce, more women earning a living outside the home from sheer economic necessity. The man who can produce "more than 5 times as many goods," also carries a much larger burden of payment for what he & others consider the essentials of living.

And writers, more than most folk, must consider the implication of those figures. Can a writer ever hope to think in terms of doing so many hours' work and then stopping on the dot? To be really creative don't you always have to work until your job is done, & it satisfies you? If you are a real writer, can you punch a time-clock? Would you willingly permit a union delegate to tell you a bell had rung when you were in the midst of an important scene? Do you think that with, or without, all the modern material productivity, you work any shorter hours than let us say, William Shakespeare. And if so, what does it prove?

It seems to me that figures such as these are still statistics. They lack human warmth and reasoning power. We need to find out why we are piling up all this machine know-how. And most of all, make it work for all men.

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### HERE'S A THOUGHT TO HELP YOU

In a recent issue of The CLARION, published by the inmates of the California Institution for Women, a prisoner who was formerly a narcotics victim, tells how she was cured through a book given her and the help of A.A. (Alcoholics Anonymous). The book in discussing Habits, told her: "There is no such thing as Will Power. There is ONLY the power to NOT want to do a thing." These words greatly impressed her, but it was not until A.A. taught her that the solution lay not in any physical "cure" alone, nor even will power, but in a God-given power greater than those to be found in herself, that she managed to overcome her weakness.

This spiritual lesson has an application, I think, for writers. There are many "problems" connected with discovering and disciplining and harnessing your full creative ability. Nearly every writer knows what it is to work under adverse conditions, or in conflict with relatives and friends, who don't have much faith in one's ability to write. A writer can therefore, derive much emotional and moral strength from pondering this help from one, who has battled a serious problem and found the way to overcome it.

When you find yourself caught in a tight, emotional trap, or a situation which builds up serious tension, remember that thought:

"There is no such thing as Will Power. There is ONLY the power to NOT want to do a thing, more than to do it."

Writing requires concentration. This idea can be a powerful comfort when the distraction of people and things press in upon you and writing as a job comes hard.

### HERE'S A WAY TO MAKE CHARACTERS LIVE

"The other day a 'good idea' hit me. I was having trouble in getting a story character to come alive. The MC is a judge in his early fifties. I searched the ads. in a copy of the SEP until I found the picture of a man, who was suitable to be my character.

"It proved such a helpful method I intend gradually to make a full character gallery. I will paste each picture on a filing card, making a note of the magazine from which it was clipped. While looking for my 'judge' I made one very interesting discovery. Majority of men depicted in the ads. belong to a 27-35 age group."

Priscilla Brockman

I think Miss Brockman, who is a Canadian, has something here. Her gallery serves several purposes. It can supply you with character traits, costume, a key to the style & general tone of the magazine, etc. It has a further advantage that it does not suggest a specific published story. You can of course blend traits, etc. from several "models".

## WE BELIEVE IN RECIPROCITY

There are reports that some of the tariff restrictions between the United States & Canada are to be discussed and possibly eased. REWRITE certainly approves of this. We talk a lot about the boundary that has no fortifications. But it still has a lot of unnecessarily restrictive red tape. Ideas in the form of books and mas. are not permitted to flow freely across the border because of the customs duty imposed on the former, and the penalties on money that writers earn, which are arbitrarily formulated by the bankers & tax commissioners.

REWRITE would like to see books and magazines and writers' supplies circulate freely in the two great democracies. This year 7 U. S. and Canadian teachers are exchanging their positions for the duration of respective school years. We have urged some Canadian writers to come across the border to the summer writers' conferences. Several of them have come down to the UNH Conference in the past. We think this is a fine thing. Writers in the U. S. and Canada have many common problems. REWRITE, which has a very extensive circulation in Canada, often receives a great deal of stimulating help in discussing these problems from its friends North of the border. We believe strongly that if writers and their clubs in Canada and the U.S. work together for the best interests of all, they will find it helps everyone equally. So, we at REWRITE want to be in the front lines of any good projects in that direction. And if any of our readers hear about such matters, we hope they will tell us about them pronto.

## NEWS AND VIEWS

### 20th Century Press reported "Out of Bus."

We were sorry to learn toward the last of November of the unexpected death of Ted Rider of Buffalo, N. Y. Although he had been in poor health for some time, he had continued to write. A member of the WCS Family, he was known to and liked by a number of the other members.

Celia M. Wright, WCS writer from way down in Texas, conducts a radio column which has been "aired" more than 50 consecutive times. She also writes a newspaper column that appears in both the daily and weekly editions of the regional paper.

News of the death of Mrs. Florence Bartsch reached us recently. She was a good friend, and long-time reader, of REWRITE. She published her own book of verse, "I Want to Live."

The GOLDEN GOOSE, Richard Wirts Emerson, 1927 Northwest Blvd., Columbus 12, Ohio, has absorbed the subscription list of SIBYLLINE — the magazine of "ideistic" writing. Subscribers not satisfied with this plan, have been requested to write to Wayne Phillips, Apt. 5-B, 110 Seaman Ave., NYC, 34.

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### QUESTION AND ANSWER ABOUT THE MOVIES

One of our readers wishes to know why the movie studios are not buying new stuff, yet all of them are "crying because they've got no new stuff, no fresh material."

Before answering that question it is very important to emphasize that the movies must never be considered a primary market. Large numbers of writers (mostly would-be writers) dream of winning fame and fortune via a movie sale. But even for thousands of big name writers, a movie sale is out of the question unless they've already made a sale in short story, novel or radio markets first. As editors or REWRITE, Bill and Elva consider it unethical and immoral to try to fatten their own pockets by discussing markets that simply are not open to the average writer. That is why we seldom touch the movies and television. Both must be considered as secondary markets—nice money, when you can get it.

The movies are not buying for a variety of reasons. The English situation, which isn't satisfactory from a financial angle yet. An element of despondency and fear has developed also from the sudden rise of television. No one knows how it will affect the movies. It is also true, as many editors, agents, & critics agree, that the movies are suffering from the multiplicity of available mss., but also the scarcity of real talent. A complaint that is constantly expressed in the book and magazine fields. Finally, there are far too many gangster stories and recently, the pseudo-romantic or colorful theatrical stories.

It is idle for writers to growl that they see worse stories than theirs in the movies and magazines. Of course they do. But their job is to turn out better ones, not be content with doing the second rate ones. It is exactly because the great popular media for entertainment are all turning out so much of the wretchedly familiar mediocre stuff, and the prices are so high, that the bottom appears to be falling out of their respective markets.

We have repeatedly said in REWRITE, and we say it again, that the great need today because of the world situation, is a stimulating, positive approach. America is living a series of unparalleled great stories. Drama is everywhere present in everyday life. Its up to the politicians and story-tellers, if they are not to fall behind, to have imagination enough to make their stories a true, vivid reflection and interpretation of real life. This is an age when we are living our stories. But because of the swift, dynamic, exhausting pace, there is a greater need of crystal clear thinking and imaginative portrayal of the bright promise of life than ever before. To the brave and the clear-eyed, you see, belongs the future. The movies are not yet showing that type of leadership. Until they do, they will continue to grasp at straws, repeat themselves and follow trends.

### DON'T WRITE OFF-TRAIL STUFF!

One of the most difficult lessons for inexperienced writers to learn is not to write "off-trail" stories while they are attempting to break into the big circulation magazines. With one or two exceptions, the "big slicks" have very definite restrictions and they do not wander far from the beaten path. They supply entertainment and a moderate amount of provocative thinking to millions of fairly convention-bound men and women. They earnestly desire freshness of appeal within the limitations of their requirements. When a writer strays beyond these, he therefore, automatically puts a strike on himself. Until you have made a name for yourself don't try to sell the big slicks unusual or unconventional stories. Give them more of the old familiar stuff done in a new and novel way.

This does not mean you must imitate or be trite. It does mean that you study the market carefully. You use strategy in selling. For instance, some of the women's magazines focus on the younger women, others on young married women, while a few reach for sedate older women. Now, each may run an occasional story for the women outside of their set. But it is still good strategy not to try to reverse the standardized markets. Also, the big magazines attempt quite often to have a timely, up-to-the-minute quality. This is to enhance their appeal, the appeal stressed in their advertisements.

Let's look at a story or two I have read. Recently, a potentially interesting story about a G.I. in love with a Japanese girl in Japan, came in. But it had several defects. It was off-trail because the girl died; the boy was infatuated rather than romantically in love, and the story was dated. It happened during the war. Now all of these defects could have been ironed out with even an ordinary consideration for the strategy. For the first time in history America has a million men under arms during peacetime. Thousands of these are serving overseas. Therefore, the thing to do is to face your young women readers and their mothers with an important problem. Bring this story up to the minute. Tie it in effectively with the headlines that have China and Japan on the front pages. Ask your reader to worry about "your boy friend or boy". The story would be much stronger if there was an American girl mixed up in it for conflict. Then the Japanese girl's death in accord with the traditional principles of the Shinto religion might be a very effective climax.

Another story I read recently dealt in an entertaining way with the attempt of a Boston society man to win back a debutante who had thrown him down and become engaged to a man she did not love. But this story turned into a too realistic study of a weak man. I ask you if feminine readers would like that, unless, again, strategy was employed to make it a compelling emotional problem.

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### DON'T WRITE TOO MANY LETTERS

It is always pleasant to be able to put a pair of writers together for mutual profit. Sometimes a lasting friendship is established or a team set up that works well and accomplishes something good for both parties. Occasionally the idea goes sour and nothing comes of it, because writers don't speak the same language of ideas, or their personalities do not blend satisfactorily. It's always worth the try, however, writing being such a hard, lonely business.

But here is a frank comment we received a few days ago from a writer. She is generous to a fault with her time. Like Bill and Elva, she delights to get good things accomplished. But she raises a very practical problem in the case of the would-be author, who spends a lot of her time and energy writing letters instead of mss.

"You know, a lot of correspondents, no matter how charming, can become a millstone around your neck. They keep you from writing — doing the work that is your regular chore — writing for editors.

"Take this —, for instance. I thought a lot of him at first. I thought he was amazing to sell all he did, being handicapped. I wrote an initial letter of sincere congratulation. He answered quickly and at length. He wanted to know my experience with several editors in their reports on mss. So far so good. But the correspondence became much too fast and furious for me: I just couldn't keep up the pace. He wrote long letters immediately upon receipt of mine, and Bill, I simply could not maintain that kind of correspondence."

Having received a good many of the identical type of letters from the same writer & a lot of others, I know how this author who sells quite a number of pieces, felt. We all of us want to help any writer who is bothered with problems. But there is a type of exceedingly busy writer, who borders on a pen-pal. He or she can be too demanding. It is possible to strain a friendship by draining energy and time that ought to go into writing. Try not to be a pest. A good friendship is always a two-way relationship. You give, and you get. You stimulate, or at least you try to talk the same language. You are in a harmonious relationship that gives you both a lift.

### NEW MARKET FOR FARM MATERIAL

ILLINOIS R.E.A. NEWS, Kay Conlan, Amst. ed., 122 6th St. St. Petersburg, Ill., "has just entered the market recently for free lance material of interest to farm readers. Articles on rural home-making and short fiction for rural youth, nine to sixteen. Lengths: 300 to 1,000 words. Pay on Acc., between 1/4 and 2/4, depending on material." Our Minute Men, Rebecca Phillips, reported this one.

### "WASTE NOT, WANT NOT"

One of the eternal riddles for the writer is what shall he read, and what shall he in his wisdom pass by. What is one man's meat, may be another's poison. You dare not overlook anything that may inspire you, yet you hate to waste precious time in dredging every dreary tome or worthless magazine. The printed word is so plentiful and so various today it takes a good man to know what must be read, and to keep from becoming muddled.

One of our readers summed the problem up: "I have to watch myself closely, practice a stern self-discipline and guard my time very zealously. Even if one were to read only the best literature, and read twenty-four hours a day, he could never read all the good literature of the world. Think of the time and strength we waste on poor stuff. When I do think of it, I feel like never putting a pen to paper. But if I refrain, people will use their time in reading something even less-worthy. And ever writer deserves to make his best ideals come to light."

We agree thoroughly with Mrs. Celia Wright. Only by trying can you hope to hammer out a thought, or discover one in the writings of another. You need to be always receptive to new ideas, but you can often tell by glancing at a book or magazine that will not help you. You tend to welcome ideas that are not dissimilar to your own. That can be a danger as well as a protection. You need always to be extending your horizon, to sharpen and develop your mind and emotions by discovering new or better ones. Remember the cartoon by Helen Hokinson of the woman in the bookshop. She looks up from a book she contemplates buying. With real fright in her face, she asks the clerk: "Will it change my thinking?" The writer must be a true cosmopolite who recognizes a good idea wherever he sees or feels it. You must never be so provincial that you fail to pick it up.

### HOW TO REDUCE YOUR POSTAGE BILL

We have mentioned several times the possibility of a writer reducing his postage expense through collecting and selling stamps that may be worth something to collectors or dealers. Here is a specific tip we received recently from Nathan Cushard, Cushard Stamp Co., Box 212, Richmond, Indiana. He wrote: "If you could get your clients and subscribers to use blocks of Commemoratives on their envelopes, it might be worthwhile. Good specimens are worth 4¢ per block to me used." A "block" is four stamps taken from a sheet—with the perforation between them not broken. Blocks from the outside edge or a corner of a sheet are especially prized by collectors. Mr. Cushard's quotation means that if you put a block of 4 Commemorative "threes" on your return self-addressed envelope, you'll reduce the actual cost to only 8¢ on mss. a cruel editor returns to you. That is a real saving in anyone's language.

## REWRITE

### WATCH FOR A SINGLE EFFECT

A point that needs to be emphasized which we have observed as a technical weakness in a number of mss. recently, is that of getting a single effect. Inexperienced writers, we have found, often start with one idea or situation and end up with another. An example is a story we read about a girl and boy in love. But the end of the story consisted almost entirely of a vivid and very realistic description of a difficult climb up one of the famous mountains of the Far East. The author had every intention that the episode should bear on the love story. But it didn't do this at all. It took precedence over the story. The background thus dominated and the basic situation was lost sight of.

This is a very common occurrence in short stories written by young, unseasoned writer folk. They apparently have not yet won sufficient control of their material to eternally focus on a single line of interest. And their natural capacity for wordiness allows their medium to get out of hand. Because it is very easy to let overplaying of a particular scene or background incident destroy a carefully planned continuity. Even when you are conscious of the danger, you need to be constantly on guard lest your material or a flow of words engendered by natural enthusiasm run away with you.

You will be helping yourself a lot if you (1) determine very clearly in each and every story exactly what is your basic situation; and (2) if you keep that squarely the issue throughout the story. (3) You should try to develop that situation in a step-by-step sequence all the way through the story. If you do this, your story may have other defects, but at least it will be a story with a continuity.

Let us look at the continuity of a story, which Margaret Cousins wrote and published. This was in GOOD HOUSEKEEPING several years ago. She first sold her MG, a little female dog to the reader in a passage of editorial narrative. Then she showed the dog in a little lane, eying longingly the home where some nice children and a pedigreed dog were playing. She wanted it for a home for herself. So, she tries to wangle herself in. But she is thrown out as a common mongrel.

She looks through the fence and sneaks in again. By sheer character and emotional appeal she wins a reprieve. The tiniest boy loves her. His father and older brother and sister favor the pedigreed dog.. Follows a conflict scene. She fights to win what she desires most. Comes the climax. Little master falls into a brook and she rescues him. The home

belonged to her. She had earned it.

Please note that in this story, a decidedly off-trail one for a big slick, the basic problem is always before the reader and the suspense mounts steadily. This is because a series of logically arranged scenes exhausts one by one chances of the little dog winning her heart's desire. I have only sketched in in the briefest manner the overtones of the plot. But even so, it must be clear that on each occasion when the little dog scores in this desperate struggle, she either immediately receives a set-back, or the temperateness of her victory is stressed and therefore, the reader is led forward to the next scene in which the little dog is almost certain to be defeated. The singleness of this story's effect is skilfully enhanced & kept constantly in the front of the reader's mind. This is something that the beginning writer and even the author who has begun to win an occasional acceptance in small markets, must watch continually. It marks one of the biggest differences between these writers & the big name authors.

### A WORD ON BOOKSELLING

The Book Manufacturers' Institute is trying hard to complete a project whereby this organization and possibly the International Brotherhood of Bookbinders will sponsor in joint partnership a Bookmobile. This would be a fine way for a union and management now to collaborate to make more work. It would be designed to sell books in areas not served by bookstores. And to widen the number of books printed rather than to increase press runs of a few best-selling books. This is in line with what the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB tries to do.

On the other hand, now that selling books is getting difficult because of high prices and reduced savings, the retail book stores are complaining increasingly at the strenuous competition of the book clubs. We hold no brief for the clubs that offer "free" or bargain priced books. You cannot sell books or anything else when someone down the road hollers, "I'll cut the price—if you will buy from me." Cutting the other fellow's throat, just to snatch his customers & drive him out of business isn't the way to develop healthy business. But we feel that a real case can be made for the ordinary book clubs that sell most of their books by mail & reach a public that the retail bookstores have too often found no profitable way to service. The clubs, such as the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB, promote books as books & develop a fondness for reading that benefits all booksellers. And we help to sell books that many of the retail shops don't handle. So, more royalties!

PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY  
Let 'em eat wood-pulp!

## REWRITE

(Exclusive)

### FROM ONE EDITOR TO ANOTHER

In our October issue we reported the story Betty Finnem (fiction editor WOMANS DAY) told at Durham about upsetting an author in the Far West by cutting her story--without, unfortunately, getting her O.K.

Now we have a happy ending to that story. One of our subscribers immediately recognized the author in question. She telephoned to the writer and read her our paragraph. Betty's frank public apology pleased the author no end. A fact we were glad to pass along to Betty. The thanks of all of us, however, go to Bess Scott Messinger, a member of the Tacoma Manuscript Club. She saw a chance to improve a writer-editor relationship and at once seized it.

### A DEFINITION BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE NWC

We don't wish to embarrass our good friend, Dave Raffelock, director, National Writers' Club. And since he not only stands so firmly on the side of writers, but also has expressed so ably the same view we have always held, we are taking the liberty of publishing a paragraph of his from a recent letter to us:

"I am in wholehearted accord with you about the critic-agent set-up. When both are combined in one office, there is always too much temptation to "victimize" the author by getting fees for both the criticism and agency service. An agent, in our opinion, should be just that and nothing else."

That is why for almost 20 years we've contented ourselves with being WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE. In all that time we have never accepted a commission for the thousands of big and little sales we have originated for our friends and clients. And why, like the better agents, we do not advertise our work.

### NEWS HERE AND THERE

Luther Evans, Librarian of Congress, will soon give the 13th annual Bowker Lecture at the New York Public Library on January 13th and his subject will be International copyright. In the past the Library has reprinted these lectures, and so they have usually been available in a small edition on application. This one should be exceptionally interesting to writers.

On Page 14 of this issue we reprinted the news item about the ECA proposing to introduce Comics into Germany with public funds. This was first reported by the NY TIMES. A spokesman for ECA now denies this proposal, adding that the Bipartite Board (Gens. Clay & Sir Brian Robertson) have allowed them to circulate. Overseas News Service denies it, quoting Military Government officials, "This

is exactly the sort of material we have been screening out." Doris Pates, Juvenile editor for the Macmillan Co., protested strongly in her capacity as chairman of the Association of Children's Book Editors. The above quoted Military Government officials in Germany have further testified that they are unable to get funds for the "purchase of the much needed technical and scientific books".

The University of Kansas City is planning a writers' conference. Tentative dates: June 7-17.

The Dallas TIMES HERALD is sponsoring another Collegiate Contest for Creative Writing. Open to students in Texas colleges and universities. \$500 prize; \$200 for the poor teacher!

Paul E. Pross, Jr. is now sending out The Bluebird Bulletin as an in-between "supplement" to his magazine, AND THEIR VOICES SHALL BE HEARD. Carries helpful writers' notes.

For instance, a sharp editorial from Georgia C. Nichols: "Why don't more of you poets get down to business and stop regarding your talent as merely a decorative feature of your personality? Develop and discipline your talent so that you can feed a hungry & distraught world. The world is hungry for expression. When you learn to express for the inarticulate the thoughts that are clamoring within him, you are feeding his hunger. Do not expect him to be gratified with half-baked workmanship.

### AN IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR WRITERS

We have just received a recent copy of the magazine, YOUNG PEOPLE, which was largely devoted to the "try-out" conference for editors and writers held last summer in Philadelphia by the American Baptist Publication Society. So successful was the idea that a second conference will be held June 27-July 2, 1949. And a plan is developing for a permanent Christian writers' organization. We at REWRITE are heartily in favor of such plans and have pledged our fullest cooperation.

Benjamin P. Browne, executive director, is also developing another fine idea. Last summer 4 young people (3 boys and a girl) used their summer vacation to "train by doing" in the offices of the ABPS, 1703 Chestnut St., Philadelphia 3, Pa. They learned how a paper is put together by actually writing and editing themselves under supervision. During the winter, students from Keuka College are doing similar work for 6 weeks. They're getting scholastic credit in their journalistic courses. They all work under "advisers".

We think this is a fine adaptation of the old apprentice plan. The editors learn a lot from intimate association with their readers. And the readers who wish to become writers, get a really practical training in the editorial offices where their writing will ultimately be used. What could be better?

## REWRITE

### NEWS OF THE WRITERS BOOK CLUB

The WRITERS' BOOK CLUB had a good year in 1948. Sales were down a bit in both numbers and dollar volume. But they were very satisfactory under the circumstances of inflated prices and deflated pocketbooks. They were maintained well right up through the end of the year. A larger number of members earned Book Dividends. The Club is also constantly selling more general books, thus materially swelling writers' royalties. We look to the time when we may be a real influence in the sale of books by members of the WCS Family.

Urge your friends to buy their books from the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB. It will earn them a Book Dividend and help us to serve you better through the stronger resources of all of our WCS Family services. NOTE: in spite of a greatly increased postal rate on books, it's our hope to continue sending your orders on a regular "postpaid" basis. We urge that you protest to your Congressmen against the rate that greatly favors magazines carrying more ads. than reading matter.

### THE FEBRUARY SELECTIONS

THE WAY TO WRITE. Flesch & Less. \$6.50. The hard hitting, logically-minded author of THE ART OF PLAIN TALK, \$2.50, has written about writing clearly and with precision. Writers should read it. Reviewed in this issue.

YOUR CREATIVE POWER. Alex Osborn. \$3. First principles in using your imagination. Written by a practical and successful advertising man, who has used them in his work.

BARTLETT'S FAMILIAR QUOTATIONS. Ed. by Morley & Everett. \$5. A new edition of a famous book. An important tool for all writers.

MYSTERY FICTION. Marie F. Rodell. \$2.50. An earlier book that is exceptionally helpful. All writers of fiction can benefit from it.

### THE JANUARY SELECTIONS

CRAFT OF THE SHORT STORY. Richard Summers.. \$5.50. One of the best and most practically teaching books about fiction writing. It is worth the rather high price decidedly.

YOUR PUBLIC RELATIONS. Ed. Glenn and Denny Griswold. \$7.50. A thorough handbook covering all aspects of the publicity business.

WRITING LIGHT VERSE. Richard Armour. \$2. An older book that is very helpful. Practically the only one on the subject that's good.

THE ART OF PLAIN TALK. Rudolph Flesch. \$2.50. An inexpensive, practical book on the business of using words effectively. It's good.

Note: you can buy these books and any others from the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB. You save money. We don't require a minimum purchase. We pay the full price. Authors get full royalties.

## REWRITE

### BOOKS OF PERMANENT WORTH

THE SHORT STORY. Kenneth Payson Kempton. \$6. Excellent discussion and practical help, by an SEP author and Harvard teacher.

WRITE THE SHORT SHORT. Meren Elwood. \$3.50. Another outstanding book on short story and short short story writing. Companion piece to the same author's CHARACTERS MAKE YOUR STORY, \$3.50, one of the few good books regarding the difficult problem of characterization and how to achieve it.

STORY WRITING. Edith R. Mirrieles. \$3. One of the great books on fiction writing.

THE CRAFT OF NOVEL WRITING. Ed. A.S. Bureck. \$2.75. A fine assortment of articles on the technique of writing novels.

ASPECTS OF THE NOVEL. E.M. Forster. \$3. One of the standard books on the same subject. A very good one. Especially for quality books.

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF VERSE. Robert Hillyer.. \$2. One of the best books about the writing of poetry. The author is a well known poet.

WRITING & SELLING SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLES. Patterson & Hyde. \$4.50. This has long been one of the best books on a great subject. A product of the practical teaching and experience with writers at the Univ. of Wisconsin.

WRITING THE JUVENILE STORY. Mary E. Hall. \$2. An experienced author wrote this book a number of years ago. It is deservedly popular.

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